

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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R 121007Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3982

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FOLLOWING SENT ACTION NEW DELHI INFO CALCUTTA AND MADRAS
FROM BOMBAY FEB 11, 1976 REPEATED FOR YOU

QUOTE

BOMBAY 0360

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT IN

SUBJECT: GUJARAT POLITICAL SITUATION

1. BUDGET SESSION OF GUJARAT STATE LEGISLATURE OPENED FEB 9
AMIDST A GROWING BELIEF THAT PRESIDENT'S RULE WILL SOONER OR LATER
BE IMPOSED. THE OPEN CONFRONTATION BETWEEN CHIEF MINISTER
BABUBHAI PATEL AND CONVOKR) MLAS ON A NUMBER OF ISSUES ON THE
FLOOR OF THE ASSEMBLY FEB 10 IS INDICATIVE OF THE CONDITIONS IN
THE STATE, AND STRENGTHENS THE GROWING BELIEF THAT MRS GANDHI
WILL NOT TOLERATE THE UNCERTAINTY AND INSTABILITY IN THE STATE
FOR LONG. WHILE THE FRONT APPEARS TO HAVE ENOUGH KMLP SUPPORT TO
CONTINUE IN POWER AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, THE SITUATION IS SO
FRAGILE THAT IT COULD BREAK AT ANY TIME. GOVERNING THE STATE
OBVIOUSLY BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT, AND MRS GANDHI'S PATIENCE MIGHT
WELL BE EXHAUSTED.

2. SURPRISINGLY, GUJARAT GOVERNOR VISHWANATHAN, IN HIS OPENING
ADDRESS TO THE BUDGET SESSION, STATED THAT LAW AND ORDER IN THE
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STATE HAD BEEN SATISFACTORY SINCE THE JANATA FRONT CAME TO POWER,

IN EFFECT REFUTING THE CONG (R) CHARGES THAT THE FRONT GOVERNMENT HAD FAILED TO MAINTAIN LAW AND ORDER IN THE STATE. ADDITIONALLY, VISHWANATHAN SAID IN HIS SPEECH THAT THE FRONT HAD MOVED PROMPTLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO IMPLEMENT THE 20-POINT PROGRAM, AGAIN REBUTTING CHARGES FROM THE CENTER THAT THE FRONT HAD BEEN DRAGGING ITS FEET ON THE 20-POINT PROGRAM. WE HAVE ONLY RECENTLY LEARNED FROM RELIABLE SOURCES THAT MRS GANDHI HAS NOT BEEN HAPPY WITY GOVERNOR VISHWANATHAN FOR HIS REFUSAL TO ADVISE DISSOLUTION OF THE FRONT GOVERNMENT AND THE IMPOSITION OF PRESIDENT'S RULE, AND HIS SPEECH IS OBVIOUSLY NOT LIKELY TO IMPROVE HIS STANDING WITH HER. PERHAPS SIGNIFICANTLY, WE HEAR THAT VISHWANATHAN HAS LEFT GUJARAT FOR A BRIEF VACATION IN HIS HOME STATE OF KERALA. RUMOR HAS IT THAT HE WILL BE SUCCEDED BY B.K.NEHRU, THE LT. GOVERNOR OF THE NORTHEAST FRONTIER AGENCY, WHOSE APPOINTMENT WOULD PRESUMABLY MAKE IT EASIER FOR MRS GANDHI TO TOPPLE THE FRONT.

3. WITH THE INCREASING INSTABILITY IN THE STATE, IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT CHIMANBHAI PATEL FIGURES PROMINENTLY IN RUMORS CIRCULATING HERE. WE HEAR THAT HE HAS MADE A DEAL WITH CONG (R) TO TOPPLE THE FRONT, THOUGH HE IS HAVING SOMEWHAT MORE DIFFICULTY NOW THAN PREVIOUSLY. CHIMANBHAI REPORTEDLY MET WITH RAJNI PATEL IN BOMBAY FEB 8 TO BRIEF RAJNI ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE STATE. CONFIRMATION OF EARLIER INFORMATION THAT CHIMANBHAI IS CONSIDERING DISSOLUTION OF THE KMLP INDICATES THAT CHIMANBHAI IS DOING WHAT HE CAN TO FURTHER CONFUSE THE SITUATION,ALTHOUGH AS WE HAVE REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, IT WILL REQUIRE MORE THAN THE DISAFFECTION OF THE KMLP MLAS TO BRING DOWN THE FRONT. RUMORS OF DISSATISFACTION OF A GROUP OF CONG (O) DEPUTIES ARE, AT THIS POINT, EQUALLY SIGNIFICANT. SIGNED COURTNEY UNQUOTE SAXBE

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